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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRAGUE 000241

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ETTC](#) [CH](#) [IR](#) [UP](#) [MD](#) [HR](#) [KPAL](#) [EZ](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: CZECHS AND GAERC MEETING: PREPARING TO SPEAK OUT  
ON HIZBALLAH AND, EVENTUALLY, CHINA

REF: A. STATE 25111

[1](#)B. STATE 26062

[1](#)C. PRAGUE 221

Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Michael Dodman for reasons  
1.5 B+D

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The Czech Republic plans to use the Feb 21 GAERC meeting to lead EU members to designate Hizballah as a terrorist organization. The Czechs are also working towards taking a leading role in the EU debate over the China arms embargo. The Czechs share our optimism about improving transatlantic relations and are focused in particular on achieving progress on Iraq and the MEPP. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Pol-Econ Chief met Feb 17 with Bohumil Jirkal, Deputy Director of the Czech MFA's CFSP Department, to discuss ref A points on the agenda for the Feb 21 EU Foreign Ministers meeting. We emphasized USG desire to engage in a regular dialogue with the Czechs and other EU members on CFSP and transatlantic issues. Jirkal stressed that the Czechs likewise value our dialogue. They share the sentiment expressed during Secretary Rice's recent visit to Europe that both the US and Europe need to move forward with the relationship, focusing not on divisions in the past but opportunities for the future.

[1](#)3. (C) Turning to the GAERC agenda, Jirkal identified the MEPP as one area where the Czechs want to focus their attention, both bilaterally and through the EU. As evidence of this, he said that FM Svoboda intends to use the upcoming GAERC meeting to put the question of designation of Hizballah as a terrorist organization before ministers. Noting that the Feb 16 EU Clearhouse meeting (refs B & C) had identified that many EU members remain opposed to designation, Jirkal said the Czechs, Danes and Dutch have agreed to highlight this at the GAERC and argue for an agreement to designate (the Czechs were surprised that the Swedes did not agree to join this effort).

[1](#)4. (C) Jirkal described Svoboda's planned intervention on Hizballah as the Czechs' second attempt to become more active on CFSP matters, following last month's Czech engagement on the EU's Cuba policy. The third target for EU engagement will be the China arms embargo. Jirkal admitted the GOCR has not yet finalized its position on the arms embargo, since many pieces are still in play, but he said the fundamentals of the Czech position are clear. First, Beijing must take some steps to improve the human rights situation, perhaps by signing "an international human rights convention" or by releasing some political prisoners. Second, the Code of Conduct and Toolbox need to be improved and become a reliable set of procedures that will regulate trade in arms and dual-use items. Third, the EU must make good on its pledge to consult with other interested parties, namely the U.S., Japan, and South Korea, before a post-embargo regime is finalized. On the latter point, Jirkal said he understands an EU delegation to the three countries is being assembled, but he had no specifics. On timing, he said France and some other members are pushing for European Council action in March, which the Czechs will resist as none of the preconditions will be in place. They believe April-May is a more reasonable timeframe. Jirkal reiterated what we have heard regularly from the Czechs: that the current "embargo" is only a political statement that has failed to halt significant arms exports to China, and that a new Toolbox and Code of Conduct stand a much better chance of achieving the U.S. goal (shared by the Czechs) of actually restricting export of sensitive goods and technology. Jirkal added that the Czechs are well aware of the likely U.S. Congressional reaction if the embargo is lifted without an effective regime to replace it.

[1](#)5. (C) On other topics, Jirkal said said the GOCR is encouraging EU engagement in Iraq, specifically following through on plans to train police, judges and others. He noted that the Czechs have been active in these same areas, but had no details about how on-going Czech assistance would be coordinated with the planned EU efforts.

[1](#)6. (C) Jirkal said the GOCR supports the EU Action Plan for Moldova. The Czechs are following this particularly closely as a Czech diplomat, Jaromir Plisek (currently head of the MFA Central European department and a former Ambassador in

Romania), is in the running to be EU Special Representative for Moldova. The Czechs are also considering opening an embassy in Chisinau.

17. (C) On Ukraine, Jirkal described the GOCR position as "less enthusiastic than Hungary" in terms of pushing for a forward-leaning EU plan for Ukraine. The Czechs believe the new government in Kiev needs to "do their homework" first and prove that they are willing and able to meet the many promises made by the new government.

18. (C) On Croatia, the GOCR shares our view that Gotovina must be turned over to the ICTY before there is any concrete movement on accession talks with Zagreb.

CABANISS